



## Implementing a Coordinated School Health Program: One Local School's Success

### Public Health Problem

Florida schools serve 2.7 million students, approximately 20% of whom live in poverty. In 1999, 81% of Florida's youth (aged 10–24 years) did not attend daily physical education classes, 78% did not participate in any moderate physical activity, 74% did not eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and about half (48%) consumed alcohol during the month preceding survey or had engaged in sexual intercourse (50%).

### Evidence That Prevention Works

Health education in schools can reduce the prevalence of health risk behaviors among young people. For example, health education resulted in a 37% reduction in the onset of smoking among 7<sup>th</sup> graders. In addition, obese girls in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades lost weight through a program at school, and students who attended a school-based life-skills training program were less likely than other students to smoke or use alcohol or marijuana.

### Program Example

Florida is one of 20 states funded by CDC for coordinated school health programs (CSHPs). CSHPs provide a well-rounded approach to school health that includes health education, physical education, health services, nutrition services, health promotion for staff, counseling/psychological services, a healthy school environment, and parent and community involvement. In Sarasota, the principal of McIntosh Middle School, who was concerned about the impact of health problems on the attendance and performance of students and staff, committed the school to a 3-year state program to establish a CSHP. Using CDC's School Health Index, the school's site-based team assessed the school's resources, developed an action plan, and integrated the CSHP into the school's operations and curriculum. Implementing a CSHP has generated access to additional resources for students and staff, improved school attendance, and increased the percentage of students who scored 3.0 or higher on a state-mandated writing assessment. In addition, the majority of students at McIntosh Middle School are Renaissance members, an honor that requires a grade point average of 3.0 or above and no referrals for discipline. The Florida Department of Education identified McIntosh as a Five-Star School with a state grade of "A," and the department also recognized the school as a "Sunshine State Success Story: Emphasizing Teaching Standards Through Health 2001–2002" for making wellness a cornerstone of its education.

### Implications

CSHPs provide a focal point for collaboration and are a good use of resources to improve the health of youth and the adults they will become. These results show how a coordinated school health program improves learning, performance, and health for students and teachers.

### Contact Information